

SNAPSHOT

Stage Merchandise to Tell “Stories”

> Successful business owners use storytelling to shape their marketing, advertising, and social media posts. Successful florists take it one step further — they stage their merchandising to tell stories.

Holly Haveman, co-owner of Kennedy’s Flowers & Gifts, brought gift store manager Trish Holmes and buying partner Dawn Eisen onboard in 2014. With this staff expansion, Haveman shifted her Grand Rapids, Michigan shop’s retail strategy to a more long-term, cohesive approach.



STAGING STORIES Kennedy’s Flowers & Gifts in Grand Rapids, Michigan, uses colors and themes to create displays that tell stories. The strategy adds an element of cohesiveness to the store’s merchandise.

“Before, we had several buyers doing their thing, buying what they liked, and our displays lacked cohesiveness,” recalls Haveman. “When Trish joined our team, she shared aspects of her corporate training with us. This elevated our displays to a whole new level.”

Holmes and Eisen’s strategic work begins each year in January at trade shows, where they take detailed notes and pictures of everything bought in each showroom. At the end of the day, they review their purchases and start categorizing merchandise into stories based mostly on color palette and seasonality.

“This is most prevalent with the winter holiday displays,” adds Haveman. “For example, merchandise in a light blue, white or frosted palette might fall into the ‘Blue Ice’ story while items with a mauve or purple hue go in the ‘Sugar Plum’ story.”

This staging tactic ensures every item has its place and is displayed in an appealing way.



“Ultimately we want our customers to imagine how products will look in their homes,” Haveman says.

Months in advance, Holmes creates merchandise plans for Kennedy’s big holiday displays and establishes calendar deadlines for when they should come to life. Taking their planning one step further, the team pre-stages many displays in the shop’s basement. They consider the following guidelines for effective displays:

- Include larger statement pieces, then layer in other products to guide the eye through the display.
- Incorporate some “littles” — smaller, easy-to-grab items.
- Add a scent to engage the senses.
- Use different textures to add interest, such as matte or glossy finishes combined with pillows and throws, or silk components to add life and soften the look.
- Don’t forget the outdoors. A floral entry arch, for example, can lead to installation jobs at residences or offices.

Now, with their long-term retail strategy solidly in place, Kennedy’s is one of Grand Rapids’ can’t-miss destinations.

“Our customers come here to be inspired,” says Haveman. “We hear from them daily that this store is their happy place.” 🌿

SOCIAL SAVVY

Are Your Posts Lacking ‘Likes,’ Shares and Comments?

Try This!

➤ At its best, social media is the perfect way to communicate with customers and industry businesses directly, effectively, and regularly. But if you’re finding your posts a little stale and predictable, or if your following has stagnated, these ideas can help ramp up your profile.

- **Plan a giveaway.** Pick a coveted item — a gift basket, bouquet, houseplant or gift — and post it as a giveaway. Ask entrants to follow your account and tag two friends. You can even ask followers to answer a question and choose your favorite response to determine the winner. This is a great way to gain new followers quickly. For a more advanced approach, collaborate with a local business on a partnership giveaway and double your visibility.
- **Ask questions.** This is a great way to drive engagement, particularly using Instagram stories. Post a quiz about your company’s history. Poll your followers for their input on favorite scents, holiday décor or gift items. The latter is also a great way to get a feel for what your customers like and want and entices them to stop by your shop. (Don’t forget to post the poll results!)
- **Share your secrets.** Use the power of Reels to reach new followers. Film step-by-step instructions for a DIY bouquet and ask participants to post pics of their finished products. Give tips on how to make cut flowers last longer. Explain how to care for common houseplants. This is a great opportunity to showcase your expertise! 🌿



TEAM BUILDER

Keep Your Team's Creativity Flowing

> The list of challenges faced by florists in recent years is long. Staffing shortages, pivoting away from and then back to in-person shopping, supply chain shortages, and increased costs have strained both energy and patience. If these hurdles have affected your ability to create freely and design with joy, you're not alone.

Jenna Naylor Temple, owner of Bloom with Jenna outside Atlanta, Georgia, has weathered many storms as a business owner, but one thing has remained steady: her commitment to design excellence. Temple, who won the Society of American Florists' prestigious live Sylvia Cup Competition in 2021, regularly encourages her team to indulge in their passions for flora and art.

"The most important thing is creating an environment where your staff has the freedom to be creative," says Temple of fostering a culture that encourages new ideas, both with her staff and her customers.

"Many of our customers are drawn to more traditional arrangements, but we still stock a portion of our front cooler with more modern designs. Not everyone bites, but the arrangements are always a talking point — and someday, one customer will want something different and will remember you're the florist who can handle it."

Temple shared her advice on how to keep staff — and even business owners — engaged with fresh ideas and reaching for new opportunities.

- **Encourage some friendly competition.** "For Valentine's Day one year, we held a competition open to everyone: designers, sales staff, delivery drivers. Whoever's design sold the most won a prize," says Temple. "Everyone participated and the winner was a salesperson — apparently, she was best in touch with what our customers wanted."
- **Allow time for connections and conversations.** "Our small team of three to five has lunch together a few times a week. It's during this low-key time that I find they will ask a question or ask to work on a new design."
- **Look to local fresh product to stay on your toes.** "One trend we participate in is using locally grown flowers in our designs. It's fun and interesting to design with stock that changes week to week."
- **Go online.** "There's so much content out there on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube," says Temple. "It doesn't take much scrolling to find a ton of inspiration." 🌿

Jennifer Sperry is a contributing writer for *Floral Management* who focuses on lifestyles, florals and interiors.

IDEAS THAT INSPIRE Jenna Naylor Temple, whose design skills won first place in SAF's 2021 Sylvia Cup Competition, offers several ideas for keeping yourself and your staff inspired.